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Three Witnesses Relate Lartigue Smoking Habits

Testify in Cigarette-Cancer Case Trial

Three witnesses in the cigarette-cancer case being tried in federal court testified Tuesday as to the smoking habits of a man whose widow brought the suit, contending that the lung cancer from which her husband died was caused by his smoking.

The case on trial was brought by Mrs. Victoria St. Pierre Lartigue, formerly of Franklin, and now a resident of Houston, Tex., against two tobacco companies. Her husband, Frank J. Lartigue, died on July 13, 1955, at the age of 65.

Those who testified Tuesday that Lartigue was a "heavy" smoker, "lighting one cigarette from another," included Mrs. Josephine Boudreaux, Houston, Tex., a sister of the plaintiff, and John Lamaison and Cornelius Lamaison, both of Franklin, nephews of the plaintiff.

'ONE AFTER ANOTHER'

Mrs. Boudreaux testified, under questioning of H. Alva Brumfield, the plaintiff's attorney, that she knew Lartigue since 1918 and at that time he smoked Picayune cigarettes and King Bee tobacco and in her presence smoked one after another.

"He had a cigarette all of the time. He would sit and drink coffee, light one cigarette, smoke it, and light another from it, one after another," she testified. She claimed that he began smoking Camel cigarettes in the 1940s and smoked about two packages a day.

Under cross examination by Harry Kelleher, Mrs. Boudreaux said that she made these observations on his occasional visits to her home in Houston.

ROLLED HIS OWN, WITNESS RECALLS

Another defense attorney, Harry McCall Jr., asked her how she happened to remember that he smoked two packages a day and she replied that she did because her family smoked Camels. Under further examination by McCall, she could not remember the color of Lartigue's hair before it turned gray or the color of his eyes.

John Lamaison said that he first remembered Lartigue rolling his own cigarettes from King Bee tobacco. He said that Lartigue also smoked Picayunes at the same time and smoked Camels "towards the last."

"He had a cigarette all the time," the witness said.

REMEMBERS HABITS

In answer to Kelleher's questions, Lamaison said that he could not remember what business his uncle was in and saw him only two or three times a year.

Cornelius Lamaison told the court that he remembered his uncle's smoking habits since he was a young boy and used to go to the store to buy tobacco and cigarettes for him. "He read a lot and would roll four or five at a time, put them by his side and light one from the other while he was reading," the witness said.

Tuesday's session opened with the cross-examination of Dr. William L. Watson, chief of thoracic surgery at the Memorial Hospital for Cancer in New York, the largest cancer research and treatment center in the world. Dr. Watson was examined Monday by Brumfield and testified that he feels that there is a relationship between cigarette smoking and lung cancer.

'FACTORS CAUSING CANCER KNOWN'

Under cross - examination by Theodore Kiendl, a defense attorney, Dr. Watson was asked by the defense if he had not testified Monday that he had never contended that any particular patient had a cancer caused by smoking.

Dr. Watson replied: "Read my articles and you will see that."

The witness took issue with Kiendl over the meanings of the words "cause" and "factor." He said: "I say there are several factors, the cause of cancer is not known in all cases but we know the factors which cause it."

Asked if the cause of cancer is a mystery, the witness said that the entire number of causative factors is unknown.

He said that Lartigue's case does not differ from 3000 cases he has studied since 1926 and that smoking became a factor in lung cancer around 1948 or 1949. Smoking histories of patients have been much more detailed since that time, he asserted.

DEPOSITION FILED

"I believe no one knows the single cause of cancer, but as the years go by we know more factors which produce cancer," he said.

Dr. Watson admitted that in an article he published in 1950 he listed air pollution, tuberculosis, and several other factors in connection with the production of lung cancer, but said that he has changed his mind. "Ten years have made a big difference," he added.

During Tuesday's session the plaintiff's attorneys filed in evidence a deposition by Dr. Bela Halpert, chief of laboratory services at the Houston Veterans Administration hospital where Lartigue died, in which the doctor said that the autopsy report showed that Lartigue died of a squamous cell cancer of the right lung.

$1450 REQUESTED IN LETTERS READ

Also read to the jury were letters Lartigue wrote to the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company after it was discovered that he had cancer of the throat and his vocal cords were removed at the Ochsner Foundation hospital.

In one of these letters he said: "I think you all are responsible for my trouble and expense," and asked for $750 in medical expenses and $700 in lost earnings.

Two depositions taken from executives of the Reynolds company and the Liggett and Myers Tobacco Company, the other defendant, before the trial, were also read to the jury.

Haddon S. Kirk, vice-president in charge of manufacturing for the Reynolds firm, testified in his deposition that his firm had had reports for many years on the nicotine content of its cigarettes but not on the tars.

'WANTED TO FIND TRUTH'

He claimed to have no knowledge of tars in tobacco and claimed that those in the tobacco industry never used the word "tar."

According to his deposition, the company became interested in the question of the relationship of smoking to cancer of the lung about 1952 and as a result the Tobacco Industry Research Committee was formed. "We wanted to find the truth," he testified.

TIRC never reported anything deleterious in tobacco, according to the deposition.

The introduction of filter tip cigarettes on a large scale had nothing to do with the alleged relationship between smoking and cancer, he testified.

'TAR CONTENT' OPEN TO DEBATE

William Augustus Blount, vice-president of the Liggett and Myers Tobacco Company in charge of manufacturing and processing, in his deposition testified that no tests have been made for tars on either King Bee tobacco or Picayune cigarettes.

When the plaintiff's attorneys referred to the "tar content" of the cigarettes, the Liggett and Myers executive answered: "I don't know what you are talking about."

He claimed that there is a residue from the smoke which "looks like tar but we have been led to believe that there is no relationship to coal tar."

'SMOKING RESIDUE' SEEN

He referred to this material throughout his deposition as "smoking residue." He said that it has been known for hundreds of years that there are black oils which come from the smoke "but it will take another 25 or 30 years to tell what is in those oils."

No one can say if filters take any of the residue out of the smoke, according to the deposition, but they do take out slight amounts of nicotine.

Liggett and Myers, he testified, is not a member of the industry's research committee, contending that the firm has the facilities to do the research better and faster.

The trial will resume Wednesday before Judge Herbert W. Christenberry at 10:30 a. m.

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